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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PRGO](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQI NSA RUBAI ON AHMEDI-NEJAD'S VISIT -  
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Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Corrected Copy of Baghdad 706

Summary

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¶1. (S) National Security Advisor (NSA) Muwaffaq al-Rubai shared his views on the purpose and meaning of the Iranian President Ahmedi-Nejad's recent visit with Embassy PolMil MinsCouns Amb. Marcie Ries and NSC's Brett McGurk in two hour-long conversations, one each on March 5 and March 7. (S/I Ambassador David Satterfield participated in the March 7 meeting.) Rubai first indicated that the visit had focused on economic issues, but on March 7 he revealed further details of discussions on security and diplomatic issues. Rubai also discussed his views on the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and Strategic Framework (SF), septel. End summary.

¶2. (S) Rubai said that a significant amount of time during the PM's meetings was spent discussing economic issues, including the nine to eleven MOUs that the two countries had signed during the visit, renovation of the Najaf and Samarra shrines, oil and gas pipelines including a pipeline from Kazakhstan, the 1 billion dollar loan (Note: apparently for Iranian products/services. End Note.), new power stations for Sadr City and Najaf, prospective rail links, and the movement of pilgrims across the border, etc. Curiously, Rubai noted that throughout the visit, Ahmadi-Nejad never once mentioned the United States during his private meetings and indeed acted "as if there were no foreign troops in Iraq."

¶3. (S) The topics of U.S. forces in Iraq and Iranian lethal aid to militants were not raised in the meetings with Ahmadinejad. This was left to a lower rung of advisors. Ahmadi-Nejad had asked Prime Minister Maliki if the Iranian Chief of Intelligence could meet his counterpart, INIS Director Shahwani. Maliki instead suggested that Rubai talk privately with the Iranian Chief, Mohammad Pur Amini. Amini and two other Iranians met at Rubai's home; Amini's primary topic of interest was the impending U.S.)Iraq long term security negotiations. Unlike Ahmadi-Nejad's meetings, in which the topic of the US and the long-term security agreement was never brought up, Amini repeatedly returned to the issue throughout their conversation, inquiring about the start date of negotiations, U.S. goals for permanent bases, and more generally what U.S. goals and desired end state were for Iraq.

¶4. (S) According to Rubai, the Prime Minister did not discuss the issue of Iranian lethal aid with Ahmadi-Nejad. The visit had "cemented" the Prime Minister's relationship with the Iranian President, according to Rubai, "which is good because it can stop the Iranians from meddling in Iraq." Rubai also was interested in U.S. views on Iran's behavior in recent months, since he believed that Iran has played a more helpful

role by reining in the Jaysh al-Mahdi and slowing the supply of lethal aid to Iraq. Amb. Ries pointed out that it is unhelpful to give credit to Iran for a decrease in destructive behavior that Iranians themselves had initiated. This was particularly true, Amb. Satterfield noted, given the increase in EFP incidents in the past month, the increase in attacks on Basrah base, and the use of more powerful 240mm rockets.

15. (S) Rubai noted the contradiction and made it clear that Iran could do more. He said he personally pressed the following three points with Amini during their meeting:  
(1) the Iranians must stop the provision of EFPs to militants - the Americans are in Iraq at the request of the Iraqi Government so the Iranians are killing our friends and this, in turn, weakens the GoI;  
(2) Iranians should tell the JAM special groups under their control to stand down, just as Sadr has done with those groups under his control, and  
(3) The Iranians should stem the flow of small arms across the southern border to militia groups - the Iraqis know through years of experience that if Iran wants to control their borders they are capable of doing it.  
Amb. Ries hoped that the Prime Minister was still planning on receiving a briefing on Iranian nefarious activities in Iraq from Gen. McCrystal, just as Rubai had received.

16. (S) Rubai noted that Ahmedi-Nejad's visit was a public relations success for the Iranians: Iran was portrayed as a regional power and, while they had missed an opportunity with the Sunni, their reception was largely positive. (Note: Sunni leaders largely boycotted the Ahmedi-Nejad visit; Vice President Hashimi made a short appearance at the meeting with the Presidency Council; but reportedly arrived late, and left

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early. End note.) Rubai was hopeful that the visit would send a strong message to Arab capitals and encourage them to send permanent diplomatic representatives to Baghdad, though he noted that it was likely that the visit would only heighten Arab fears of Iranian encroachment and influence in Iraq. He confirmed that he will be traveling to Saudi Arabia, to prepare a readout on the trip, and to encourage the Saudis to finally send their ambassador. He asked for U.S. assistance with meetings while in Saudi Arabia. McGurk noted that while we favor strong neighborly relations between Iraq and Iran, there appeared to be no public statement from any Iraqi leader about Iran's negative influences in Iraq. He said this causes problems in the United States, as well as the region, where critics of our policy claim the Iraqi government is falling under Iran's sphere of influence and may not warrant sustained support.

17. (S) Rubai said Ahmadi-Nejad appeared to be obsessed with occultation and the "Hidden Imam." Rubai described one of the Iranian President's last meetings in Iraq, held at Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim's house. In a room full of 30-40 people, Ahmadi-Nejad lectured for an hour about the return of the Mahdi, claiming that the wait united both Arab and Persian Shia. Shia senior leaders, including the Prime Minister, Adil 'Abd al-Mahdi, Ahmad Chalabi, and Mohammed Bahr al-Ulum attended. After about an hour, Kazemi-Qomi passed Ahmadi-Nejad a note after which he ended his talk. Rubai noted that some Shia had been quietly bewildered by the display and that Bahr al-Ulum had joked about Ahmadi-Nejad's religious fervor, claiming that "he should go back to the hawza."

18. (S) Comment: Rubai's characterization and description of the visit comports with others who provided first hand accounts, including Foreign Minister Zebari, Vice President Adil Abd al-Mahdi, Ammar al-Hakim, and President Talabani. A common theme is that this visit should prod Arab states to send diplomatic representation to Baghdad. We have noted that the visit on its face will not have this effect, and Iraqis need to take the initiative to support U.S. efforts

with Iraq's Arab neighbors. Rubai claims his visit to Saudi Arabia is designed for this purpose.  
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